CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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NOTE VERBALE DATED 29 JUNE 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT DELEGATION OF FRANCE TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARIAT, TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF THE STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR GERARD ERRERA ON 29 JUNE IN THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON A NUCLEAR TEST BAN

The Permanent Delegation of France to the Conference on Disarmament presents compliments to the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and has the honour to transmit herewith the text of the statement made by the Permanent Representative of France, Mr. Gérard Errera, on 29 June 1995 in connection with the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Permanent Delegation of France would be grateful if the secretariat would arrange to have this statement registered as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to all member and observer delegations to the Conference.

My delegation wishes to inform the Committee of the following three decisions:

(1) Firstly, regarding withdrawal clauses, some months ago we made a proposal whereby one of the events which might jeopardize supreme interests would be a fundamental change in the international circumstances which were the basis for the conclusion of a CTB.

The idea was to have the text of the treaty reflect one of the elements of the French position which we had explained at the start of negotiations, namely, that the permanent ending of tests was linked to an assessment of the international strategic situation, particularly the observance of commitments in the spheres of disarmament and of non-proliferation. I also explained to the Conference on Disarmament on 29 July 1993, and then to the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban on 7 February 1994 what we meant by this: "We have particularly in mind the main instruments which determine [---] our assessment of the strategic situation, inter alia the ABM Treaty, the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, the START process [---] and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons."

The debate which we had on withdrawal clauses at the last session revealed the continued existence of reservations on this proposal. Some delegations considered it superfluous, not to say problematic:

Superfluous in that the concept of supreme interest is sufficiently broad to cover a wide variety of situations;

Problematic in that it could restrict individual States' freedom sovereignly to assess the events jeopardizing their supreme interests.

Under the circumstances and in the interest of furthering the negotiations, France has decided not to press for the insertion of this wording. It considers its objectives - which still apply - to be covered by the general provision in the rolling text which reads "Each State Party shall, in exercising its national sovereignty, have the right to withdraw from this Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events related to the subject matter of the Treaty [---] have jeopardized its supreme interests".

Without making it a condition for the withdrawal of its proposal, my delegation naturally urges the other delegations which have suggested additions to the withdrawal clause to support the traditional wording too so that it can be adopted by consensus.

(2) Secondly, it is clear that the nuclear Powers still retain a fundamental responsibility, that of ensuring the safety and reliability of their weapons.

We have stressed this crucial point since the start of negotiations.

I declare, therefore, that the safety and reliability of its nuclear weapons represent for France a supreme interest.

(3) Finally, as to the duration of the future treaty, my delegation is in a position to state its formal agreement with the concept of a treaty of unlimited duration. The brackets around the word "unlimited" can therefore be removed.